

CONJUGAL ROLES AND ETHNICITY  
IN FOUR FINNISH-AMERICAN FAMILIES

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

There is great risk in attempting to describe any American institution, since there is so much diversity. With respect to the family, there are regional, social-class, religious, and ethnic differences. Additionally, each family unit may have its own idiosyncratic role expectations, mode of socialization, and rules (Eitzen, 1982:376).

As a member of the Finnish-American ethnic group my studies in the American Culture program were early directed toward researching various aspects of the Finnish immigration to the United States, which occurred as a mass movement late in the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth century, prior to the immigration acts of the 1920's.

The purpose of this research project is to examine conjugal roles and ethnicity in four contemporary Finnish-American families. If both husband and wife or either husband or wife are from Finnish descent, the family is considered to be a Finnish-American family. These four families are selected from a Finnish-American organization called the "Friends of Finland", which meets at the International Institute in Flint, Michigan. I am also a member of this group myself, which fact will hopefully to make my informants feel comfortable during the interviews.

The discussion about conjugal roles has been narrowed down to the question: Are conjugal roles segregated or joint

in these four Finnish-American families? The justification for examining conjugal roles can be found, for example, in Gary L. Bowen's and Dennis K. Orthner's study about "Sex-Role Congruency and Marital Quality," in which they state that many forces--including the changing demographic and role profiles of women, changes in the structure of the family, and the considerable publicity accorded sex-role issues in the press--have contributed to the increased salience and importance of sex roles in today's society (Bowen and Orthner, 1983:223-224).

In this research I find it useful to use Elizabeth Bott's terms 'complementary', 'independent', and 'joint' organization of familial activities. In complementary organization the activities of husband and wife are different and separate but fitted together to form a whole. In independent organization the activities are carried out separately by husband and wife without reference to each other, in so far as this is possible. In joint organization the activities are carried out by husband and wife together, or the same activity is carried out by either partner at different times. The phrase segregated conjugal role-relationship is used for a relationship in which complementary and independent types of organization predominate. Husband and wife have a clear differentiation of tasks and a considerable number of separate interests and activities. They have a clearly defined division of labor into male tasks and female tasks. They expect

to have different leisure pursuits, and the husband has his friends outside the home and the wife has hers. The phrase joint conjugal role-relationships is here used for a relationship in which joint organization is relatively predominant. Husband and wife expect to carry out many activities together with a minimum of task differentiation and separation of interests. They not only plan the affairs of the family together but also exchange many household tasks and spend much of their leisure time together (Bott, 1971:53-54).

Max Gluckman states in his preface to Elizabeth Bott's book Family and Social Network that human societies and cultures are so intricate, the product and field of so many interacting variables, that each time a hypothesis is erected it is immediately liable to be amended or even destroyed by some exception. What is clear is that the very search for propositions, even when the propositions come under question, deepens our understanding of social life. Such search has very important practical implications. In the first place, spouses who as children have been reared in one type of family, and are then thrown into a situation in which they have to sustain the roles of the other type of family, may find that they are unable to carry out the responsibilities which are pressed upon them by the new network, or miss the support of the old network if it was close-knit. Secondly, and arising from the first point, it may be that social workers and psychologists add to these diffi-

culties if they try to help all families through their troubles in terms of the ideal of joint companionship and activity. This is an ideal specific to a particular type of family; and to thrust it on a family with segregated roles may merely increase the strain on the spouses. There is of course no suggestion that spouses whose roles are segregated meet troubles less effectively than others, for the social ties, if not the emotional ties, between them may be strong because of their very complementarity (Bott, 1971:xxvi-xxvii).

Mindel and Habenstein state in their concluding chapter of their collection of essays entitled Ethnic Families in America that with the passing years the established ethnic families become smaller in members, the nuclear units of husband, wife, and children become more visible and free standing, family households are less likely to have three generations under one roof, and other nonrelated members such as boarders become almost nonexistent. Yet in all respects except the last these changes have been at a slower pace than for families in the society at large. Extended family organization, for example, continues to remain important both as a back-up system of social support and as a resource for services, sponsorship, and often financial assistance. The "father-headed and mother-centered" ethnic family has not disappeared even though the roles of both parents, particularly the father's, are becoming less



institutionalized. The area of negotiation of internal family matters has expanded at the same time and values of companionship and spontaneity are emerging where once controls and restrictive norms held families together somewhat in a state of compression (Mindel and Habenstein, 1976: 422-423).

I am using Maxine Baca Zinn's definition of ethnicity to identify ethnicity in these Finnish-American families:

Ethnicity was defined as a distinct group identification based on perceived similarities within a group, self-labeling in group terms, and patterned distinctions in values, customs, and rituals of family life (Zinn, 1980:49).

Mindel and Habenstein state in their introduction to Ethnic Families in America:

Ethnicity is usually displayed in the values, attitudes, life styles, customs, rituals, and personality types of individuals who identify with particular ethnic groups. Had these ethnic identifications and memberships no other effect on peoples' lives than to provide interesting variety within a country, sociologists would long since have described them in their variety and moved on to other matters. But identification with and membership in an ethnic group has far-reaching effects on both groups and individuals, controlling access to opportunities in life, feelings of well-being, and mastery over the futures of one's children (Mindel and Habenstein, 1976:1).

The above quotation also supports the relationship and significance of this research project to the American Culture program, which focuses on problems and issues within

contemporary American life.

First, however, we need to see the Finnish-American family in its historical perspective. The importance of this factor is clearly brought out by Mindel and Habenstein in Ethnic Families in America:

It bears repeating that the historical experience of the ethnic group with respect to when the group arrived on these shores, as well as the conditions under which the members of the group were forced to live, is a vitally important factor in the explanation of the persistence of the ethnic family and the ethnic group as well (Mindel and Habenstein, 1976:1).

Finnish immigrants' life conditions prior to their emigration, . . . the Finnish immigrant family, their education, religion, politics,--their adjustment, acculturation and Americanization, were all researched from the available literature dealing with Finnish immigrants.

The empirical sources for this project are focused oral interviews with each of the four Finnish-American families; a couple in their 40's, 50's, early 70's, and a widow in her upper 70's.

During the interviews questions were asked about marital roles as they related to decision making, household activities, and leisure activities. Questions about Finnish ethnicity were asked in the areas of food, language, and religion. Also two questions about group ethnic identification were directed to these Finnish-American families.

The topics of the questions can be found in the appendix.

The findings can not be considered representative of Finnish-American families in general because of the small sample size. The value of the present research lies in the relationships that the empirical data suggest and not in the proof that these relationships are characteristics of all Finnish-American families. The extent to which the findings may be generalized to other Finnish-American families is a matter for further research.

## CHAPTER II

### SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

#### I. Family Life and Ethnicity

##### A. The American Family

American family customs, when compared with the family customs of other societies, are characterized by considerable freedom. One instance of relative autonomy is that the American family is unusually equalitarian, although there is a tendency for the male parent to be considered the head of the household, most families are relatively democratic. Certainly there is wide variation by family unit in type of power arrangement (Eitzen, 1982:376).

Males and females have traditionally been assigned mutually exclusive roles in marriage and family relationships, with husbands performing the "instrumental" role of breadwinner and wives performing the "expressive" role of homemaker. In many contemporary marriages, however, there is an increasing emphasis on individual preferences or abilities instead of traditional gender-related roles (Nass and McDonald, 1982:86).

It's becoming increasingly evident that in the United States today attitudes toward gender roles are changing, both in and out of marriage. These changes seem to be occurring more rapidly for women than for men. Sexton (1979), for example, reports that men continue to be more traditional

than women in their gender role expectations.

A long term study conducted by the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center and Population Studies Center (1980) seems to support this view. The study found significant changes over the past two decades in the attitudes of adult American women regarding outside employment, child bearing, and family roles. Subjects of the study were a random sample of 969 white Detroit area women who had just married or just given birth to a first, second, or fourth child. These women were interviewed by telephone in 1962, 1963, 1966, 1977, and 1980. As of 1980, 90 percent of the original participants were still in the study.

Among the questions they were asked was whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement: "Most of the important decisions in the life of the family should be made by the man of the house." In 1962, 66 percent of the women agreed with this statement; in 1977, only 33 percent agreed with it; and in 1980, only 23 percent agreed with it. A second question asked the women whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement: "It is perfectly all right for women to be very active in clubs, politics, and other outside activities before the children are grown up." In 1962, only 44 percent of the mothers agreed; in 1977, 60 percent agreed; and in 1980, 64 percent agreed. The study also found that some of the women who had originally planned to remain at home ended up working outside the home after all. In 1962,

54 percent of the women did not plan to work outside the home at all, but in 1980, 64 percent were working outside the home, 30 percent of them full time (Nass and McDonald, 1982:89).

Another study (Yankelovich, 1980), prepared for the President's Advisory Committee for Women, suggests that since the mid-1970's there has been a dramatic shift in American public opinion regarding the role of women. This study found unqualified acceptance by husbands of the right of their wives to work outside the home, and overwhelming support for the concept of reproductive freedom and the right of women to participate in public life. At the same time, the study showed that people are realistic about the stresses experienced by women who work outside the home and supportive of the need for programs such as day care to help working mothers. Most Americans now believe that husbands and wives should share financial decision making and household and parenting chores. These attitudes represent a considerable shift from the thinking of the mid-1970's, when the majority of Americans still regarded housework as women's responsibility, though so far this shift has been more in attitudes than in behaviors (Nass and McDonald, 1982:90-92).

Eitzen argues that masculine and feminine roles are basically cultural, not physiological, phenomena. He states that the defining characteristics of masculinity in American society are assumed to be dominance, aggressiveness,

competitiveness, and independence. To be "feminine" in American society is to have a role that is conforming, passive, and dependent. A crucial element, however, is self-sacrifice. The female in American society is taught to sacrifice her own wishes for those of her husband and children.

Evidence for cultural prescriptions for the masculine and feminine roles is seen clearly in the way duties are divided in American families. Data from numerous studies indicate that men and women tend to do those tasks for which they have been culturally trained. Males are expected to be more mechanical and muscular while females are trained to know more about cooking and cleaning. Clearly, there is a strong tendency for the division of labor to be along these lines, but there is variation. Each family unit must work out the particulars of its own division of labor.

Each family must also decide who will make decisions in the key areas. Whether the male or the female predominates in a particular decision making area is culturally assigned, but as with division of labor, there is some variation (Eitzen, 1982:382-383).

#### B. Ethnicity in America

Part of the explanation for the lack of concern for ethnic differences among many scholars has been the feeling that these variations are only of transitory nature; they

will soon go away. Indeed, historically ethnic groups and ethnic communities might very well have served purposes that seemed very much unnecessary today. In the past, ethnic communities served to preserve the familiar of the old country for large numbers of people set adrift in an alien America. And America, from its very beginnings an ethnically diverse society, was not as a matter of moral principle hostile to the existence of distinct cultural groups.

Several writers have attempted to explain why ethnicity has remained important. In the 1950's Herberg argued that interest in religion was rising, not because of any interest really in its doctrine, but because religion was a more respectable way of maintaining ethnic primary groups than ethnicity itself (Glazer and Moynihan, 1974:12). In like manner, Greeley in 1969 suggested that religion and ethnicity are inextricably intertwined, and that the persistence of ethnic groups and ethnic identification is due to continuing religious identification (Mindel and Habenstein, 1976:5).

Glazer and Moynihan have also analyzed the evolution and persistence of ethnicity. They argue that "the adoption of a totally new ethnic identity, by dropping whatever one is to become simply American, is inhibited by strong elements in the social structure of the United States." These inhibitions range from labeling to brutal discrimination and prejudice as well as the "unavailability of a simple 'American'



identity" (Glazer and Moynihan, 1974:116).

The main tenets of ethnic identification and solidarity ultimately rests on the ability of the family to socialize its members into the ethnic culture and thus to channel and control (perhaps program) future behavior.

One of the most significant ways in which an ethnic culture is expressed is through family activities. The family historically has been a conservative institution, and those cultural elements concerning family life, if not affected by outside forces, will tend to repeat themselves generation after generation. Experiences within the family are intense, heavily emotion-laden, and are apt to evoke pleasurable or painful memories for most individuals. For example, eating "ethnic" food remains a significant part of the ethnic identity (Mindel and Habenstein, 1976:7).

Cultural patterns define family roles and statuses, rights and obligations, and there are many attributes of an ethnic culture that are mediated through the family. For example, cultural values concern such issues as achievement, style of life, and educational or occupational aspirations. Another consideration is that many historical, economic, and other factors such as discrimination and prejudice have limited the mobility of individuals in many ethnic groups. For others, however, the possession of a cultural reservoir of motivations and skills has worked to their distinct advantage, and the lack of this reservoir has worked to

their disadvantage. For example, the cultural tradition of the Jews, with its emphasis on literacy and education, has helped them immeasurably from a socioeconomic standpoint. On the other hand, the Poles have only recently begun to emphasize the importance of education for their family members. These cultural distinctions, while existing to some extent outside the family context, are for the most part developed within the family (Mindel and Habenstein, 1976:8).

Initially, the ethnic family of mid and late nineteenth-century America represents a transplanted, adaptive, primary social unit engaged in the business of conserving and rebuilding ethnic culture, and through a distinctive socialization process, of creating new generations in the image of the old (Mindel and Habenstein, 1976:415).

Important changes in ethnic family structure and function have taken place, but an institutional residuum of what was a discernible historical type of ethnic family remains of undeniable social import. It is, however, neither as unitary and viable as the "unmeltable ethnics" position holds, nor is it a mere vestigial remnant of some bygone set of rapidly fading institutional arrangements, as the assimilationists have wanted us to believe over the past half century (Mindel and Habenstein, 1976:421).

For the modern middle-class ethnics, with husband and wife both often holding well-paying jobs, the ethnic family

may begin to move toward the equalitarian or companionship mode. Yet many examples suggest that cultural residues still have their effect. Equality in work disposes ethnic families toward sharing in authority, responsibilities, and in relating to external society. Nonetheless, Mindel and Habenstein state that

There is no evidence across our broad spectrum of families that all who share roughly the same economic contingencies are headed in a single direction and at the same rate of development (Mindel and Habenstein, 1976:426).

The initial ethnic family developed considerable unity through division of labor and authority, habituated role playing, and encouraged family rituals and ceremonial participation in sacred and pragmatic activities. Today's counterpart has been unable to display or assemble a clearly agreed upon, integrated set of definitions of what all members might best be doing at all times (Mindel and Habenstein, 1976:427).

## II. Finnish Immigrants in the United States

### A. Life Conditions in Finland Prior to Emigration

In describing the background of Finnish emigration, Mark Knipping, in his booklet Finns in Wisconsin, gives a good account of the conditions and underlying reasons which precipitated Finnish emigration in the late 19th century. The following is a paraphrased summary from his work:

For centuries Finland had existed with an agrarian economy which resulted in a traditional, immobile society. Because of the harsh climate and rugged terrain, farmers were able to cultivate less than 10 per cent of the country's land surface, primarily growing grain crops such as rye, oats, and wheat which required a large labor supply during harvest time. The rural population was mainly composed of farm laborers and tenant farmers working for the wealthy, landed classes and accustomed to a barter system in which goods and services were traded for the few items needed on the independent estates beyond what could be produced locally.

Initially the traditional self-sufficient farm units were small in size. Owing to the fact that beginning about 1750 the state took steps to combine scattered landholdings into larger, more efficient farming units, many of the small farmers were thereby displaced and reduced to working as farm laborers or tenant farmers, or to simply becoming vagabonds in search of their next meal. The disappearance of small, independent farmers continued into this century until by 1901 43 per cent of all rural households were those of landless farm laborers, while another 34 per cent toiled as tenant farmers. Only 23 per cent owned their own land. Moreover, about 70 per cent of all farms totalled less than 20 acres of cultivated land, and over 30 per cent of all farms were smaller than five acres. In addition to paying his landlord a cash rent, a tenant was often obliged to spend a specified number of "footdays" and "horsedays" each year, laboring on the landowner's acreage (Knipping, 1977:6).

Isaac Polvi, who was born as a tenant farmer's son in Finland in 1879, writes in his reminiscences:

My father was burdened with debts from his purchase of a tenant farm, as when he bought it he took over the liability

for the debt from the previous owner, and was obligated to work for the landowner every fifth week. He soon tired of this, as he did not seem to get anywhere. He decided to sell this farm and be free from the debt, and be a free man (Polvi, 1949:43).

Isaac Polvi's father came to America, and eventually the rest of his family was able to follow him.

Factory workers in Finnish cities also faced uncertain futures, slaving long hours for low wages and in addition being subjected to frequent unemployment and hazardous working conditions. The enormous surplus of workers kept wages low, and the children of working families were compelled to toil in factories from an early age onward.

August Tornquist, who later emigrated to Kenosha, Wisconsin, wrote of his boyhood in Finland:

At the age of nine, I worked in a tobacco factory from six in the morning until eight at night; at the age of ten, I was pasting labels in a brewery; at eleven, I was a shoemaker's helper; at thirteen, a tinsmith's boy; at fourteen, a shoemaker's apprentice--these were my childhood games, these were my childhood joys (Knipping, 1977:8).

During the winter of 1892, almost three-fourths of Helsinki's workers were unemployed. There was famine during that year and the next, and in 1894 there were bread riots.

Starvation was nothing new to the Finns. The country's population more than tripled during the nineteenth century, and food production was subject to the whims of a harsh climate. Adverse weather caused a series of crop failures,

and severe famine swept the land from 1862 to 1868. In 1868, when starvation reached its peak, one out of every thirteen Finns died that year.

To add to the Finns' grief, compulsory military service was forced upon the male population in 1878, with the result, that many young men left the country to avoid the draft. The situation worsened in 1901, when Russia ordered the Finnish army to disband and incorporated the Finnish soldiers into the Czarist army. Wholesale noncompliance resulted, with many young men refusing to report for induction, and many others leaving for the United States to escape military service.

A rigid class structure, in which a few persons owned and controlled most of the country's assets, left the mass of the population without a voice in governmental affairs. At the end of the nineteenth century, only 6.7 percent of the urban residents and 4.3 percent of the rural inhabitants could vote in national elections. The upper classes resisted all changes to better the lot of the working poor, opposing reform as well as out-migration, which they feared would reduce manpower and thereby raise wages and increase the demands of the laborers.

Yet many of the peasant Finns clung to the dream of personal independence. It was a dream they knew could never come true in their homeland; perhaps in America it could. Accordingly, between 1864 and 1920, more than 300,000 Finns

chose the westward route across the Atlantic, leaving everything behind--roots, families, careers, and memories, knowing in their hearts that they could never return. Most of them were bound for the United States (Knipping, 1977:8-9).

A. William Høglund comments in his book Finnish Immigrants in America, 1880-1920:

Departing, emigrants received little sympathy in Finland. Churchmen, writers, and public officials were generally critical and hostile. The critics had little understanding of the emigrants, who came primarily from the lowest rank of society. Emigration occurred, so to speak, outside the sphere of the educated and ruling classes, who failed to appreciate why the emigrants departed. As long as they failed to understand that it was the desire for better working opportunities which impelled departure, critics were apt to regard emigrants as unthinking adventurers, and even as traitors and moral laggards (Høglund, 1979:10).

Upon arriving in the United States, Finnish immigrants usually struck out for communities which contained some major industry, or for the mines and lumber camps which needed large numbers of unskilled laborers. Most of the arrivals came from the landless or small landowning classes, including agricultural laborers, tenant farmers, and the children of small landowners. The Finns still observed the ancient system of primogeniture, in which the eldest son inherited the family farm, while all other sons joined the ranks of the landless poor. These immigrants were described as "stiff-necked, having the strength of a bear, the endurance

of a mule, and disciplined in the Old Country to perform even the most dismal jobs." Since about 85 percent of them were rural peasants, and only 15 percent came from the cities, they entered the American labor market on the bottom rung of the employment ladder as low-paid, unskilled laborers. During the first decade of the twentieth century, American immigration officials classified over 60 percent of the Finnish men as "general laborers"--one of the highest percentages among all immigrant groups (Knipping, 1977:10-11).

The goal of many arriving Finns was to establish themselves as small independent farmers, because agriculture had been their experience in Finland. But though the Finns often dreamed of a small farm as their escape from a wage-earner's life of toil, their poverty upon arrival dictated some delay. Significantly, between 1890 and 1910, most were forced to take temporary jobs as laborers in order to save enough to purchase a farm. They found work in the copper and iron mines, in factories, and on the railroads. Some tried fishing or sailing, and others labored as dockhands. Many Finns tried logging at some time or other, and many who later turned to farming continued to work in the woods to provide wintertime income. Mining probably ranked first on a national basis in absorbing Finnish workers, and thousands were almost directly upon arriving from the trains into the mine shafts (Knipping, 1977:11-12).



B. Social Institutions among the Immigrants

1) Family: The following excerpt is from the article "The Finns as a Native American Sees Them," which appeared in Koti-Home magazine in 1922:

The writer has had the good fortune and rare privilege to visit in numerous Finnish homes in Minnesota and with Finns in the larger centers of the United States. Among no other people has he seen homes more orderly or more cleanly. Even in the homely two room log cabin neatness, precision, and the atmosphere of the sacredness of home were delightfully refreshing to one who has seen so much dirt and squalor among the foreigners in the congested tenements of the cities (Van Cleef, 1922:2).

To shed some further light on this subject, I will now take the city of Crystal Falls in Iron County, Michigan as an example, and by using the information contained in the 1900 Federal Census, attempt to ascertain what kind of family and household structure the Finnish immigrants had.

The book A Collection of Recollections: Crystal Falls, Michigan 1880-1980 describes this little city in Iron County, in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan:

The city of Crystal Falls, born in 1880 of the early iron mining and timber explorations in the southwest of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, sprawls leisurely on hilly terrain extending east and west from the Paint River. It is a city that, in growing from its first settlers' shacks to a picturesque residential community, went into partnership with nature in preserving a natural setting for itself (Miller, 1980:18).

The Federal Census for 1900 gives a total of 611 families for the city of Crystal Falls (which also included the township of Crystal Falls). Out of this total there were 123 Finnish born heads of household, which indicates that 20 percent of the population were of Finnish descent. You could find Finnish born people in 143 households, but in 20 cases the head of the household was of another nationality.

Table 1 provides a rough picture of the family and household structure of Finnish immigrants in the city and township of Crystal Falls in 1900.

Table 1 shows that household augmentation with boarders and nonrelatives was significantly more frequent than family extension with kin, with one out of every two homes (50%) containing two or more nonrelatives, clearly demonstrating the prevalence of and preference for this form of living arrangement, and another 12.2 percent containing one non-relative. Altogether 70 percent of the households were extended or augmented, and approximately three in every four contained at least two persons other than the married couple and their children. In a number of these cases the census records show that many of these households contained multiple (up to twelve) boarders.

Boardinghouse experience within the American household was a common phenomenon in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century. John Modell and Tamara K. Hareven's study "Urbanization and the Malleable Household:

TABLE 1

The Family and Household Structure of Finnish  
Immigrants in the City and Township  
of Crystal Falls in 1900

Family Structure (Extension)

Nuclear . . . . .	37	. . . . .	81%
Extended to one relative . . . . .	8	. . . . .	17%
Extended to two or more relatives . . . . .	<u>1</u>	. . . . .	<u>2%</u>
Total	<u>46</u>		<u>100%</u>

Household Structure (Augmentation)

Family only . . . . .	46	. . . . .	37.4%
Augmented to one nonrelative . . . . .	15	. . . . .	12.2%
Augmented to two or more nonrelatives . . . . .	<u>62</u>	. . . . .	<u>50.4%</u>
Total	123		100.0%

Household Structure (Overall)

Nuclear family only . . . . .	37	. . . . .	30.0%
One additional relative or nonrelative . . . . .	23	. . . . .	18.6%
Two or more additional relatives or nonrelatives . . . . .	<u>63</u>	. . . . .	<u>51.4%</u>
Total	123		100.0%

An Examination of Boarding and Lodging in American Families" shows that the taking in of strangers in exchange for pay or services was more widespread than sharing household space with extended kin. Surrogate kin in the household served as important sources of support and adaptability to the new urban environments (Modell, 1977:164-186).

Table 1 shows that over 50 percent of the Finnish households in Crystal Falls, Michigan were augmented with boarders.

Reino Nikolai Hannula, in his book Blueberry God, gives us this glimpse of his mother's Finnish boardinghouse in Gardner, Massachusetts:

The restaurant was a boardinghouse. Some customers patronized the restaurant as if it were a family-style restaurant.

.....

Another group of men ate three meals a day and paid their board bill by the week. Usually the payment was not in advance. These workers didn't pay in advance because when they started to eat their meals in our restaurant, they had just gotten a job and they were flat broke. For many reasons, including alcohol and the very low wages paid in the Gardner factories, they were never able to save enough money to pay in advance.

.....

A third group of workers not only ate three meals a day in the boardinghouse but they also rented a room or, to be exact, a share of a room. The demand for rooms in my mother's boardinghouse was so great that every room except father's and mother's room had at least two beds in it. One of my brother's and I shared a room with two boarders. In the eighteen years I lived at home I never had a room all to myself.

Many of these permanent boarders were very close to the family. Some were as concerned about father's and mother's

financial problems as any member of the immediate family. When the boardinghouse had to move, they not only moved with it, they helped with the moving. They moved out of the "nest" only to get married, to take a better job in another community, or because they were drafted into the armed forces in World War II (Hannula, 1981:88-89).

Kristian Hvidt argues in his book Flight to America that all national emigrations pass through various phases, beginning with a pioneer emigration consisting mainly of men (Hvidt, 1975:86-87). This hypothesis is also true in the case of Crystal Falls, Michigan. The Federal Census for 1900 shows that there were 468 Finnish-born men and 157 Finnish-born women (persons 15 years old and older were counted as adults). In other words, in our present example of Crystal Falls, as Hvidt's theory would predict, Finnish-born men did outnumber Finnish-born women by a ratio of 75 percent to 25 percent. In further support of this trend, Keijo Virtanen's data, in his doctoral dissertation Settlement or Return: Finnish Emigrants (1860-1930) in the International Overseas Return Migration Movement, shows that the proportion of men in the emigration totals was highest in the early stages of the emigration, and he calculated that about 65 percent of the emigrants in the period between 1869 and 1914 were men (Virtanen, 1979:125).

It is interesting, also, to note that the article "Census in Finland" which appeared in Koti-Home magazine in 1922 gives the following information:

In 1920 the number of emigrants amounted to 2,516 males and 3,079 females, making a total of 5,595, and in 1921, 1,280 males and 2,277 females, or a total of 3,557 (Koti-Home, 1922:14)

## Men's and Women's Roles

Eugene VanCleeef, in his article "The Finns as a Native American Sees Them," claims that:

The Finnish immigrant man is mechanic, shoemaker, farmer, fisher, merchant and whatever he finds it incumbent to do. The Finnish woman is seamstress, laundress, unexcelled housekeeper, home-maker and dependable co-worker. Both man and woman are fond of reading and absorb all the knowledge which their limited time permits (VanCleeef, 1922:2).

Eloise Engle gives an interesting description of the typical Finnish-American farm wife in her book Finns in North America:

The most valuable asset a Finn had was his Finnish wife. It was she who held things together in the home and community while the husband was at work in the mines or the forests. And it was she, with her incredible stamina, sisu and ability as jill-of-all-trades, who made survival in the wilderness possible. Professor John T. Kolehmainen cites the example of a Toivola, Michigan woman, one of thousands who took it all in stride. "She bore thirteen children, ten growing to adulthood; for forty years she was the region's only midwife, making 103 safe deliveries. When her husband worked at distant logging camps, she took charge of the farm; she hitched the horse, plowed and harrowed, sowed seed by hand from a dishpan; she milked the cows and nursed the ailing stock. She tanned hides and made footwear, spun wool and knitted garments. She hauled food supplies from the nearest

store, a round trip journey requiring three days. She kept the farmhouse in repair, raised the chimney, and found time to help the neighbors; once she rescued a child from a 28-foot well. She felt no sense of being a heroine, wrote a reporter, but because she had versatile ability and unquenchable energy, she lived up to the standards of that day. These people had to work hard, do those things or go under" (Engle:48-49).

The literature supports the argument that the Finnish-American households were not exceptions to the usual boardinghouse experience which occurred within many American households in the 19th century and early 20th century. Mens' and womens' roles were traditionally segregated, though the immigrant experience seemed to demand that the women extend their responsibilities beyond their traditional homemaker roles as, for example, the descriptive account Eloise Engle demonstrates.

2) Education: Jingo Viitala Vachon describes her early school days in her book Tall Timber Tales:

The little old schoolhouse I went to as a child was quite different from today's modern schools. It was in Toivola, Michigan, near the wild, rugged shores of Lake Superior, in an isolated Finnish farming and logging community. Built of handhewn timbers, it stood gray, grim and forbidding by the country road which was little more than a wagon track. Inside it was warm and cheery. A large box stove glowed red hot when the thermometer dropped to forty below, and the children moved to empty seats nearest the stove.

The teachers were mostly girls fresh out of high school, and sometimes had no more than an eight grade diploma. A

college degree wasn't necessary. It was considered sufficient that they be able to teach the children to speak, read and write English and to learn their numbers (Viitala Vachon, 1973:1).

Professor Van Cleef observed that the Finnish immigrants took advantage of night schools wherever they were accessible to them. When rural schools were established the Finnish immigrants' children eagerly attended them. He commented that in the towns on the Iron Range of Minnesota it had been said by school superintendents that "the Finns are the backbone of the night schools." Professor Van Cleef claimed that in the normal schools where training for teachers was given, the Finnish young women held their own among all comers, and not infrequently set records approached even by native Americans (Van Cleef, 1922:2).

The writer of this paper talked about education with Ahti Mackela who was born in 1913 in Ishpeming, Michigan as the youngest son in a family of four children of immigrant parents. In this discussion he commented that the Finnish immigrants felt that it was important for their children to be educated. They helped them to go to college, if the children had a special desire to do that. He went on to express deep gratitude for his parents, brother, and sisters who all helped him to go to college, and for the "country of opportunities," which allowed him the opportunity to go to college, even during the Depression, and to fulfill his dream of being a teacher. He retired as the chairman of the



Science and Mathematics Division of Mott Community College in Flint, Michigan.

When we talk about education, it should be mentioned as an interesting side light that in 1896 Suomi College Theological Seminary, the only Finnish educational institution of higher learning in America, was founded for the training of ministers for the Finnish Lutheran churches and for the higher education of the Finnish youth in harmony with Lutheran religious principles (Wargelin, 1940:190). Suomi College, which is located in Hancock, Michigan is today a four year junior college.

Finnish immigrants' appreciation for education has given their children social mobility, which is possible in American society.

3) Religion: A. William Hoglund writes in his book Finnish Immigrants in America: 1880-1920:

Addressing his estate in 1891, a bishop declared that emigration drained needed labor from agricultural areas. He said that no one had to leave Finland to find land; besides departure violated the Biblical injunction to remain and work in one's native country (Hoglund, 1979: 11).

We can argue that it was the close union of Church and State and the political exploitation of Christianity that during the nineteenth century pressured large numbers of Finns to emigrate to the land of religious freedom in the West.

Isaac Polvi, who was born as a tenant farmer's son in Finland, writes in his reminiscences:

I remember once when the pastor and the police chief came to our house. They asked my mother if we had a cow. Mother answered that we didn't have one. The pastor then said "You haven't paid your husband's personal tax." My mother answered "My husband is in America and he has told me not to pay it, because he isn't breathing here and he pays his taxes where he is breathing." They came in and saw my mother's sewing machine. They made a note concerning it and the pastor later announced two or three times at church that the sewing machine was to be auctioned by the police. And so they had their auction and the police chief asked; "How much is offered for this sewing machine?" One old man, our good neighbor, Juho Vainiontausta, stood up and asked: "How much is the debt?" The pastor answered and Juho counted the money out on the table and said: "I don't want to see you taking this sewing machine away from her, because she needs it. Here is your money." The police chief said: "I want my payment, too." Juho answered: "The government pays your salary." So a farmer remarked that a police chief had a yearly salary even if he did nothing and he couldn't demand any special payment for his services. I made my judgments then of what the real character of government employees, ministers, and the upper class was. I was hardly ten years old, but the opinions I made of them at that time are the same now. I haven't changed them, but rather on the contrary, I am more assured now than I was then that I made the right judgement in my childhood (Polvi, 1949:62-63).

Reverend Leslie Niemi, who is the pastor of Eden Lutheran Church in Munising, Michigan, writes in his article "Religious History of Finns in America" that Finnish con-

gregations were springing up wherever Finns settled, usually without benefit of direction from church officials. Finnish peasants were quick to construct small churches at great personal sacrifice because the church was central in their lives. If the congregations were not Apostolic Lutheran, the decision had to be made whether to join the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church or the Finnish National Lutheran Church. Some congregations remained independent and were served by anyone who would come as a traveling pastor (Niemi, 1971:68-69). Reverend Niemi comments that according to his estimates about one third of the Finnish immigrants actually joined Christian congregations in America, or about 100,000 out of 300,000 (Niemi, 1971:70).

Amanda Wiljanen Larson writes, in her book Finnish Heritage in America:

The Finn today is totally American but even the third and fourth generations treasure their Finnish heritage and have remained faithful to their Lutheran religion (Wiljanen Larson, 1976:37).

This supported allegation that Finnish-Americans and their descendants have remained faithful to the old Lutheran state religion that they or their ancestors left behind them in the Old World is very dubious, to say the least. If anything, as the excerpts quoted above from Isaac Polvi and Leslie Niemi demonstrate, something bordering more on the opposite has actually taken place. Although by and large they have remained Protestant, the evidence would tend to

indicate that a very large number of them were not at all adverse to leaving their Old World state religion behind them in Finland, and to joining one of a large number of other Protestant denominations that they found in America.

4) Politics: Pauli Opas from the embassy of Finland in Washington, D.C. writes in his article "The Image of Finland and Finns in the Minds of Americans":

The Finnish immigrant was poor, his occupations were manual, and though literate in his native language, was uneducated. He was in the lower social strata; his social and political influence was minimal (Opas, 1971:14).

Eloise Engle writes about the Finnish-Americans and Socialism:

The Labor Finns had the bitterest time of all. Their group was started by refugee radicals who fled the 1899-1905 Russification program in Finland, and by 1906, had organized a national Finnish Socialist Federation. They built a successful and powerful socialist organization--then wrecked it because of ideological squabbling, issues of industrial unionism and later communism. By 1913, there were 13,847 members of the far leftist group.

Finnish socialists established several newspapers; Raivaaja ("Pioneer") in Fitchburg, Massachusetts; Tyomies ("Workingman") in Hancock, Michigan; Industrialisti ("Industrialist") in Duluth, Minnesota; Naisten Piiri ("Women's Circle") in Superior, Wisconsin; and Toveri ("Friend") in Astoria, Oregon. Much of their activities involved "Hall Socialism", which was mostly cultural and social. But there were painful controversies, too, which finally broke the force of the movement. During the 1930's, almost all Finnish socialists were shocked to learn the true nature of Red Communism in Russia. One Finnish American said that com-

munism was "like a beautiful toy with which we played, giving luster to our dances and plays. We spoke with a communist mouth, but out of a social democratic head. We knew nothing of communism's severity, iron discipline, and demand for complete self-abnegation." Not much is left of these radical groups; even their newspapers now concentrate almost entirely on social and cultural aspects of life in North America. As one of them commented; We tried to fly higher than our wings could carry us.

There is little doubt, however, that the early Finnish socialists and unionists contributed greatly to America's social consciousness. They braved the establishment's wrath before it became fashionable to do so (Engle:58-59).

John Wargelin adds an interesting point that when the loyalty of the Finns came to a test by the Russian invasion of Finland on the last day of November, in 1939, the Finnish socialists in America, as well as in Finland, stood united in their support of the democratic government of Finland (Wargelin, 1940:193).

John Wargelin also claims that the first Finns cast their vote with the cause of Abraham Lincoln, when they fought in the Civil War, and it became a tradition with them to side with the Republican party. The prohibition party also received the support of some of the sympathizers of the temperance cause. In the 1930's many Finns favored the policies of the Democratic party under the leadership of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Emil Hurja, a son of Finnish immigrant parents and a native of Crystal Falls, Michigan rose to national prominence during President

Roosevelt's first administration (Wargelin, 1940:193).

### C. Adjustment, Acculturation and Americanization

Juha Pentikäinen, professor of comparative religion at the University of Helsinki, makes the following comments and observation about Finnish-Americans in his article "Studying the Cultural Identity and World View of the American Finns" which appeared in Siirtolaisuus - Migration magazine in 1982:

Differences have also emerged in the attitudes held by the generations toward Finnish and Finnish American culture and tradition and toward the language and the Old Country. The first generation typically remained permanently torn between their new home in North America and their heart in Finland, whereas the second generation tended to stress economic objectives and assimilation to American culture, while the third generation has begun to turn back once again in quest of their roots. Family history offers a means of tracing at the grassroots level both their process of acculturation and their present day vision of their Finnish roots (Pentikäinen, 1982:13).

As soon as the Finnish immigrants arrived in America, they sought each other's companionship. As newcomers to a strange land, they attempted to establish a familiar social order, drawing upon their cultural heritage to found a rich variety of associative organizations, which would serve as mechanisms of adjustment. The Finnish-Americans' world became crowded with churches, temperance societies, working-men's associations, newspapers and co-operatives. We have already covered the subjects concerning religion and socialism.

Mark Knipping, in writing about temperance societies, tells us that:

Many temperance societies were launched by the immigrants. . . These institutions were much more than crusaders against the evils of intemperance. Many of them assumed significant fraternal, cultural, and social functions. They provided illness and funeral benefits, sponsored dramatic and choral groups, bands and debating clubs. They also established libraries and reading rooms containing well-thumbed books and newspapers from the old country, and endeavored to cater to the recreational needs of the immigrants through folk games and dancing festivals. Many of the Wisconsin societies were short-lived, however, not many witnessed the rise and fall of the Prohibition Amendment (Knipping, 1977).

Immigrant associations imported books and newspapers from Finland in order to find literary nourishment in their native tongue. But before long, distance, among other things, forced immigrants to develop newspapers that could serve them more effectively than those imported from Finland. Becoming avid newspaper readers in America, immigrants could not depend upon the haphazard delivery of old imported papers. Newspaper reading was a new experience for most immigrants from the countrysides of Europe. In 1899 a journalist declared that there was more newspaper reading among Finns in America than in Finland. To satisfy the need for reading material, private publishers began to issue scores of weeklies in the two decades after 1876. But their papers did not last more than a few years except for a few like the Uusi Kotimaa ("New Homeland") and Siirtolainen ("Immigrant").

The history of most publications, said one journalist, was a "nice name, short life, and early death." This situation changed, however, when organizations began to issue their own newspapers.

Although private publishers continued to promote papers like the Pohjan Tähti ("North Star"), New Yorkin Uutiset ("New York News"), Amerikan Sanomat ("American Tidings"), and Päivälehti ("Daily Journal"), after about 1900 organizations were not satisfied with such publications and instead issued their own. The private papers which survived did so partly by permitting their columns to be used by competing organizations. This policy, however, did not entirely satisfy the organization-minded, who felt that a newspaper should serve the interests of only one group. Private publishers found it harder to continue and a publisher declared in 1910 that he had closed his publishing house because financing was difficult to obtain unless one were connected with some party cause. Synod Lutherans depended on their American Suometar ("American Finn"), National Lutherans published the Auttaja ("Helper"), and socialists owned the "Työmies" ("Workingman") and the Raivaaja ("Pioneer"). Various associations also had monthly and quarterly publications besides newspapers. But whether or not immigrants read organizational newspapers and journals, they all shared in developing literary independence from Finland (Hoglund, 1979:45-47).



Newspapers trained writers in terms of life in America. As the press provided an outlet for the articulate, hundreds became correspondents who reported community events and the affairs of local organizations. When editors and writers learned English, they often drew copy from American newspapers and press services. In 1916 an editor stated that ten years before, his paper had taken its copy mainly from sources published in Finland, but now it was different, he said, because the staff was better able to interpret events in America (Hoglund, 1979:47).

By learning the English language editors and writers broadened the sources of ideas for their readers and helped them to adjust to the unfamiliar living conditions that they found in their new homeland.

The Finns were believers in a co-operative business system, which was voluntarily owned and controlled by its members, and operated by them on a nonprofit or cost basis. Their co-operative creameries in Minnesota, apartment houses in New York, wholesale grocery in Superior, Wisconsin, and their various kinds of co-operative organizations in Michigan testify to their ability in establishing this method of production and distribution. They brought the idea from Finland where the movement has had considerable influence and success. The types of co-operative organizations found in Michigan, some thirty of which were affiliated with the Central Co-operative Wholesale of Superior, Wisconsin,

included general stores, creameries, gasoline stations, fire insurance companies, flour mills, savings banks, and boarding and rooming houses. The annual sales of the Central Co-operative Wholesale in 1938 were 3,356,550 dollars. These establishments aimed to eliminate the middleman--storekeeper, banker, and employer. They followed a democratic principle: voting membership, often limited shareholding, dividends in ratio to purchases, and subordination of the profit motive to the common good. In proportion to their number, the Finns have been leaders in introducing the co-operative movement into Michigan (Wargelin, 1940:191-192).

Helmi Warren wrote about the idea of Americanization in her Finnish language article "Is Americanization Necessary During Peacetime" which appeared in Koti-Home magazine in 1922. The following is an excerpt from her article translated into English:

Humanity, brotherhood and equality are the three main cornerstones in the doctrine of Americanization. . .

The genuine American is one of the most admired people on this earth. . . Justice, helping others and self-sacrifice are virtues the Americans strive to realize. It does not hurt anybody to learn about Americanism, even if he lives far away from this country, and still less for them who make their living in this country.

You can not find any country in the world, in which the inhabitants are led by higher ideals than in America. America does not want all these ideals for herself only, but rather she offers them to everybody.

. . . . .

Doesn't every Finnish American want to be an educated person? Not only educated through book-learning, but also to possess an inward sense of intelligence and understanding. A person whose endeavors and activities prove him to be a genuine American as a person, as a Christian, as a citizen and as an inhabitant of this country (Warren, 1922:25-26).

The excerpts below are from the poem "This Is My Heritage," which is included in the collection of short essays and poems written by Finnish-Americans in response to the Finnish-American Bi-Centennial Committee's determination to publish articles which would preserve some individual accounts of history for posterity:

This is my heritage and proud am I to say  
 Born of Finnish parents both sides all the  
 way . . . . .  
 Yes this is my heritage, and so glad am I  
 My parents wouldn't let their fond memories die,  
 Those recollections of their own youth and birth  
 Of a homeland so full of real living and mirth,  
 Yearnings for the summer of the midnight sun,  
 Bring back remembrances of endless hours of fun.  
 . . . . .

But here in closing, I am also proud to shout,  
 That I am an American, without a doubt.  
 Only here in the United States do so many roots  
 reach out,  
 To the homeland and to the countries the World  
 about.....

(Collander, 1976:8-10)

I was helping to distribute "Reading in Fundamental" books in my younger son's kindergarten classroom. I wrote each child's name in the book that he or she had chosen. A towheaded boy came to me and spelled his name very clearly and slowly: Mike Laurila. His last name is distinctly Finnish and his physical characteristics are typical to any

Finlander. I asked him if some of his grandparents came from Finland. I got the answer: "They came from up north." This answer was good enough to satisfy the five year old boy's curiosity about his ethnic roots. But perhaps sometime in the future he might become more curious about finding out more detailed information about his ancestors.

During the summer of 1982 I had the chance to spend a week in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan among the Finnish-Americans mainly in the city of Negaunee in Marquette County. I was able to meet several people who had first hand experiences of being immigrants themselves. I felt very privileged to have had this opportunity to listen to their stories. This type of original first-hand information will soon be lost or available only in forgotten historical archives.

I agree with Ralph J. Jalkanen who writes in his preface to the essay collection entitled The Faith of the Finns:

Perhaps the major thrust in the concern of ethnic diversity is a rediscovery of our past in order that we might become better Americans (Jalkanen, 1972:xv-xvi).

### CHAPTER III

#### METHODOLOGY

These four Finnish-American families were selected from the members of a group called the "Friends of Finland," which meets at the International Institute in Flint, Michigan. I met representatives from three of these families for the first time at the institute in the fall of 1980, when the institute hosted a Finnish luncheon. The other, Mrs. Hill, I had met briefly before that, when we attended the same lecture. After the lecture, I went to pick up my younger son from the nursery. Mrs. Hill overheard me talking to my son, and asked if I was Finnish, because my accent sounded so familiar to her. We talked for a short time and exchanged telephone numbers, and decided to get together at a later date. Mrs. Hill called me and informed me about the luncheon, which I decided to attend.

During the course of three years I have made friends with these families. Perhaps the common bond of being Finnish has been one of the strong factors in our friendships. I chose these families, because they were both representative and easily accessible. When I asked about interviewing them for my research project, they graciously accepted my "stepping into their private lives."

Previous research on conjugal roles and ethnicity (Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Bott, 1971; Zinn, 1980) helped define the

issues and formulate interview questions. I had prepared a set of questions about marital roles, concerning decision making, household activities and leisure activities. Questions about Finnish ethnicity were from the areas of food, language and religion. The topics can be found in the appendix.

Leonard Schatzman and Anselm Strauss state in their book Field Research:

One of the fortunate properties of the interview regarded as conversation is that it need never appear to have a conclusion. Formal interviews have conclusions; but conversations, albeit intermittent, are like ordinary relationships, capable of continuity (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973:74).

My interviews with these families were focused, but at the same time very conversational. I spent several hours in their homes, and we talked about a lot of other things, too, although I gently guided the conversation toward the questions that I needed to ask. I felt that a single interview was enough to give me an adequate perspective and good information for my research, because I had already built trustful relationships with these families. Schatzman and Strauss state:

Another important contingency is whether this is a one-shot interview or one of several, and where in that series it falls. If it is the first of an expected series of meetings, then the interviewer may be more concerned with building good relationships than with getting good information (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973:84).

Brief descriptions of the sample families follow. Their names have been changed to protect their privacy.

Mr. and Mrs. Palo are a retired couple in their early 70's. Both of them have a Master of Arts degree in mathematics. Mr. Palo retired ten years ago from the local community college, where he had served as the chairman of the Mathematics and Science division. Mrs. Palo worked as a teacher before her marriage, but stayed at home after her marriage. They have a daughter.

Mr. Palo's parents were born in Finland. Mrs. Palo is not of Finnish descent.

Mrs. Koivu is a widow lady in her upper 70's, whose husband worked at General Motors as a welder. After her marriage Mrs. Koivu stayed at home and raised three sons.

Both Mrs. Koivu's and her husband's parents were born in Finland.

Mr. and Mrs. Hill are a couple in their late 50's. Mr. Hill worked for General Motors as a machinist and retired from this position about two years ago. After raising seven children Mrs. Hill enrolled in the local college and received her Bachelor of Arts degree in elementary education. She has established her practice in Christian healing as a Christian Science practitioner.

Mrs. Hill's parents were born in Finland. Mr. Hill is not of Finnish descent.

Mr. and Mrs. Eskola are a couple in their middle 40's,

who have one teenage daughter. Mr. Eskola works at General Motors as a computer specialist and Mrs. Eskola works part time as a private duty practical nurse.

Mr. Eskola's parents were born in Finland. Mrs. Eskola herself was born in Finland.

The findings of this research project cannot be considered as representative of all Finnish-American families, because of the sample size. The value of the present research lies in the relationship that the data suggest and not in the proof that these relationships are characteristic of all Finnish-American families.

In three of the four cases women also spoke for their husbands. Mr. Palo was the only husband who participated in the interviews. But I did not let this fact hinder my research. When Blood and Wolfe did their interviewing in the Detroit area for their book Husbands and Wives, they talked with the wives only, because they found out that it was so much harder to reach the husbands.



CHAPTER IV  
ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS

I. Marital Roles

A. Decision Making

Jan Pahl states in her article "The Allocation of Money and the Structuring of Inequality within Marriage," which appeared in the Sociological Review in May, 1983:

I shall argue that in societies in which money is a source of power, and income and wealth are central expressions of advantage, the relative economic positions of husband and wife must be reflected in their relationship, it is likely that the balance of power between husband and wife will be reflected in their control over economic resources (Pahl, 1983:238).

One of the eight questions that I asked in the area of decision making was: "Who decides whether or not the wife should go to work or quit work?"

Mrs. Koivu answered this question as follows:

Even if I would have just mentioned the subject of my going to work, my husband would have gone through the ceiling. During the war my husband's boss offered me a job at Buick, and my husband was angry at him for even offering that awful suggestion.

It was interesting, in this regard, when Mrs. Palo said that she and her husband never had discussed this issue. She liked teaching, which she had done before her marriage, but she never went back to work after her marriage. As she put it: "It just seemed to work out that way." She commented

that after Mr. Palo's retirement this issue was discussed in the family, when their daughter asked her why she did not go back to teaching. Then she found out that Mr. Palo had not wanted her to go back to work, though he had never audibly expressed his opinion. She said that perhaps she would have protested more, if she had known where he stood on that issue. Mr. Palo, the only husband who participated in the interviews, commented that there was no financial need for Mrs. Palo to work, to which he added the classic comment: "My mother never worked outside the home."

Mrs. Hill answered this same question by saying that:

My husband did not allow me to work. After my second child was about five months old, I went to work at Buick, but Bob kept bugging me, saying that either I quit or he would quit. He has now changed his mind, however, and he now wants me to work.

In this regard, Mrs. Eskola stated:

My husband knows better than to try to influence me. He would say: "Do whatever you want to do."

These four examples perhaps are a good reflection of the passing attitudes of our society to the issue of women working outside their home, rather than individual or ethnic opinions. In their book Husbands and Wives Blood and Wolfe define power as the potential ability of one partner to influence the other's behavior, and they argue that power is manifested in the ability to make decisions affecting the life of the family. They state that the balance of power

between husband and wife is a sensitive reflection of the roles they play in marriage (Blood and Wolfe, 1960:11). But perhaps a more accurate and current assessment would be that we are coming to a crossroads in the course of the history of mankind, when segregated role behavior expectations are outlived. I can support my argument with Mrs. Koivu's and Mrs. Hill's responses to my questions about decision making in different areas. They would answer the question and emphasize their answer with the sentence "I had been brought up to believe that women do not even object to men's decisions."

When I asked the question: "How much money can the family afford to spend per week on food?", Mrs. Koivu answered:

My husband gave me what he wanted to give and I managed with that. I could write a book about how to get along with nothing if it were necessary.

Mr. and Mrs. Palo said, in response to the rest of the questions in the area of decision making, that their decisions were the result of their mutual conclusions, after they had individually studied their different options.

Mrs. Hill commented that she was only 18 when she got married, and her husband was three years older, and she thought that he knew everything. She said that she was always afraid of displeasing her husband so that she did not even voice her opinions. She said that she was raised to

believe that the man is the boss. She would answer many of the questions about decision making by saying:

That used to be entirely my husband's decision--remember we are talking about the time when we were young. But now it is different. It is as if I am not talking about the same man.

Mrs. Eskola commented in this regard that decision making in their family is mutual. However, she seems to contradict this somewhat in her answer to the question of how much money the family can afford to spend per week on food, when she responded:

He gives his paycheck to me. I make all the investments and pay the bills. I think that he does not even know how much money we have.

Gary L. Bowen and Dennis K. Orthner examined the congruency of sex role attitudes of husbands and wives and tried to assess how these attitudes were related to the quality of the couple's relationship. On the basis of their study they concluded that the sex role attitude congruency of husbands and wives is related to the level of marital quality perceived in the marriage. The marriages found to have the lowest evaluation of marital quality were those with a traditional husband and a modern wife. They suggested that the greater difficulty that the mixed sex role attitude couples experience in the marital relationship is probably the result of the pressures from wives to change the role expectations of their traditional husbands and a reluctance on the part of the men to change. This is likely

to lead to irreconcilable differences over the basic rules of the relationship, increasing the probability that these marriages will be defined as inequitable. Since the term equity emphasizes balancing rewards and constraints in a way that is felt to be fair even if not identical, to be successful couples should be able to establish a relationship which both spouses define as equitable or just (Bowen and Orthner, 1983:227-228).

An excerpt from a recent editorial in the Christian Science Monitor points out the fact that our society has made major advances in this area:

Much of the change toward equalizing relationships between men and women was overdue. For instance, when the U.S. entered World War II in December, 1941, the ensuing shortage of male factory workers finally made a place in society for married women to be employed; shortly before the war working women still were being fired for having committed the "crime" of marrying. Today society agrees married women may decide whether to be home or to work in the marketplace, depending in part on their economic needs; sixty percent of wives do work outside the home (The Christian Science Monitor, October 5, 1983).

#### B. Household Activities

Three sociologists recently conducted a study of how couples divide up the housework. Richard and Sarah Berk of the University of California at Santa Barbara and Catherine Berheide of Skidmore College in New York asked 748 wives to keep a diary of one full day's household chores. They also asked some 350 husbands to fill out questionnaires on their

household tasks. Among the findings:

Wives with full-time jobs still devote almost a quarter of their day to housework.

Only 5 to 10 percent of the nation's husband-and-wife households share housework about evenly. In most families, the woman still does 80 to 90 percent of the housework, even when she takes an outside job.

Couples who share the housework evenly, for the most part, do not represent young, college-educated, liberal-minded families. Rather, the most equal sharing occurs among retired couples, because the husband has more free time than he did when he was working and helping to rear children.

Husbands use a variety of dodges to get out of additional housework, such as unfamiliarity with how all temperature soap powder works, lapses of memory of where things are kept, and procrastination that outlasts the wife's patience--so that she ends up doing the task herself.

Interestingly enough, however, in light of this study, women in the U.S. are not complaining about housework (Nass and McDonald, 1982:235).

I asked my informants eight questions about their household activities. Only one of the women has worked outside her home for any length of time during her marriage, but her answers did not differ substantially from the answers of the other women concerning household labor.

To the questions "Who repairs things around the house?",

"Who mows the lawn?", and "Who shovels the sidewalk?" the husband was agreed to be the answer. But Mrs. Palo said that she has always done the painting, because she likes to paint, and during his professional career Mr. Palo did not have time to do it. She added that she can also fix leaky faucets, though she would rather let her husband fix things like that.

Mrs. Koivu complained that her husband would not allow her to paint, though she liked to do it, and that all she could do was to sand before painting.

Mrs. Hill commented that she also did some painting and decorating, though her husband otherwise kept things repaired around the house.

Mrs. Eskola gave an honest confession: "My husband does all these things; if it were up to me, this house would be falling apart."

To the questions "Who does the grocery shopping?", "Who gets the husband's breakfast on workdays?", "Who straightens out the living room, when company is coming?", and "Who cooks the evening meal and does the evening dishes?" everybody agreed it was mainly the wife's job.

When Berheide, Berk, and Berk studied housework patterns among wives, 43 percent of whom worked full-time outside the home, the researchers found "very little evidence" of husbands contributing "more than a minimal amount to household work," even among the wives who worked full-time outside

the home and contributed their share to the provider role. Despite the seeming unfairness of this arrangement, most of the women surveyed accepted the division of labor, for different reasons. Some felt that the specific tasks were boring, tedious, or tiring, but that the larger roles of mother, wife, and homemaker were satisfying. Many of the women, too, had such strong attachments to their families that the housework seemed worth it. They would comment that "a labor of love may at times not seem like labor at all" (Nass and McDonald, 1982:236-237).

Nonetheless, could we not argue that women have kept the sole responsibility of the housekeeper role long enough? They are, after all, now taking part in the provider role. Since the "boring, tedious, and tiring role" of a housekeeper is a full-time job, should not many of these tasks be shared by different family members, and thereby perhaps add new and expanded meaning to the above mentioned phrase that "a labor of love may at times not seem like labor at all?"

I also asked the question "Who keeps track of the money and the bills?" In all four cases it was the wife's job, though in two of the families she was not able to control the money. Mrs. Koivu commented that her husband gave her a certain amount of money, which was supposed to cover the groceries and the bills. Mrs. Hill emphasized that she kept track of the bills, but she did not have the authority to manage the money. She said that she marked down on the



calendar when the bill was due, and then her husband only gave her exactly the amount that was necessary to pay the bill. Mrs. Palo, on the other hand, said that she has always had free use of the money, and that she can spend as much as she needs. She said that Mr. Palo has never wanted to keep her accountable to him for the family budget. Mrs. Palo keeps track of the family expenses in "the figure book," which is used as a reference rather than as a budget guide. Mrs. Eskola commented that her husband gives his paycheck to her and she can use it as she sees most practical. She wondered if he even knew how much money and investments they had.

Ralph Linton, a noted anthropologist, argues that if we are to maintain the family institution we must solve the problem of insuring congeniality between the partners. We need a new interpretation of the basic principles of the institution of marriage, which are that its main functions are those of an economic unit and those of raising children. As he sees it, women of the younger generation are creating new social roles for themselves, and it is a safe bet that both as wives and as women they will be happier than their mothers (Linton, 1963:173).

#### C. Leisure Activities

Recent findings from the Better Homes and Garden magazine survey found that 83 percent of the respondents spend their free time at home, and the respondents said that is

where they feel happiest. Sixty-five percent said they are spending more time at home now than they did five years ago (The Christian Science Monitor, July 19, 1983).

I asked my informants questions about their leisure activity and found out that in this area of their relationship joint organization of familial activities is relatively predominant.

Mrs. Koivu remembered how on weekends the whole family used to go fishing, to the movies, or just visiting with relatives or other Finns. In later years Mrs. Koivu used to go to concerts with a lady friend. She mentioned that after her husband started drinking, he went right from work to the bars, but he never did this on weekends, preferring rather to join with the rest of the family in their leisure activities. On Sundays they attended church.

Mr. and Mrs. Palo mentioned that they spend their leisure time mostly together. They go to plays, concerts, movies, and sometimes to football and baseball games, because Mr. Palo is a sports fan. Usually they just like to spend quiet weekends without any special plans. On Sundays they go to church. As a sort of hobby, Mr. Palo has been a member of the Toastmasters Club. Mrs. Palo, however, only attends their special conventions. Mr. Palo also belongs to the Retired Mens' Organization. He goes swimming at the YMCA two or three times a week.

Mrs. Hill, in recollecting what they used to do on weekends, when their children were growing up, mentioned that they took the kids along almost everywhere they went, and did a lot of inexpensive fun things together. For example, early in the spring they would go asparagus hunting, later on wild strawberry hunting, and many other little things like these. After they started going to church, that became their main activity on Sundays. Mrs. Hill commented that at one time her husband used to belong to many different organizations and was always away from home, but she felt so burdened with the children and with having the responsibility for them all the time, that she asked her husband to drop some of his outside activities, whereupon he dropped all of them. She regretted the fact that he had dropped all of them, because she thought it was good for him to have some outside activities of his own.

Mrs. Eskola said that they spend their leisure time together as a family. They go to concerts, movies, out to eat, out for a ride, or just stay at home and read or relax. She mentioned that her husband does not have any outside activities, which he attends alone.

After examining conjugal roles in the area of decision making, household activities, and leisure activities in these four Finnish-American families, we can begin to answer our question: Are conjugal roles segregated or joint in these families? Elizabeth Bott used the terms 'complementary',

'independent', and 'joint' organization of familial activities, which terms were defined in detail in the introductory chapter of this paper. Interviews with these families support the argument that complementary and independent types of organization of familial activities predominate in these families. Therefore, we can conclude that conjugal roles in these four Finnish-American families are segregated.

## II. Finnish Ethnicity

In the preface of their book, Ethnic Families in America, Mindel and Habenstein state:

Considering the fact that America, a nation of immigrants, still contains large numbers of families who see themselves as members of ethnic groups and for whom ethnic culture still has important behavioral consequences it seemed appropriate that a volume on these distinctive family types might be organized (Mindel and Habenstein, 1976:vii).

I asked my informants questions about Finnish food, language, and religion. I also asked two specific questions about their group ethnic identification.

### A. Food

Mrs. Koivu fondly remembers how her mother used to cook, or bake, Finnish foods, such as 'ruisleipä' (= rye bread); 'pulla' (= sweet coffee bread); 'näkkileipä' (= hardtack or crisp hard rye bread); 'kalamojakka' (= fish soup with potatoes); 'viili' (= whole milk soured by a special method); 'fariinapuuro' (= brown sugar porridge); 'riisipuuro' (= rice

porridge); 'ryynipuuro' (= oatmeal porridge); 'lanttulaatikko' (= rutabaga casserole); 'lipeäkala' (= lutefish or dried cod); 'maksalaatikko' (= liver and rice casserole); 'kropsu' (= bread made with blood as an ingredient); and 'suolakala' (= salted fish). While her family was growing up, Mrs. Koivu fixed many of these foods herself, but nowadays, since she is living alone, she seldom fixes special Finnish food.

Though Mrs. Palo herself is not of Finnish descent, she has a Finnish cookbook, and she especially likes to bake Finnish bread. Mr. Palo remembers his Christmas holidays back at home in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan with Finnish ethnic foods (he specially names 'lutefish'), but he admits that his sister, who still lives in Ishpeming, Michigan, no longer follows the Finnish traditions in preparing her Christmas meals.

Mrs. Hill said that she is again getting to be familiar with Finnish ethnic food at the Finnish Club in St. Petersburg, Florida. She remembers how her mother used to bake and cook Finnish food, and she herself used to take great pride in baking her own 'pulla' (= sweet coffee bread).

Mrs. Eskola commented that she does not make any special effort to cook Finnish food. She admitted that many times Finnish cooking is plain and you can do better by following American recipes.

## B. Language

It is claimed that language is an important indicator of ethnicity since it plays a central role in the efforts of cultural groups to maintain and develop their heritage (Zinn, 1980:57).

Mrs. Koivu had not learned to read or write in Finnish, though she spoke it. After she moved to Flushing, Michigan, and corresponded with her family in Cloquet, Minnesota, she had to teach herself to read and write in Finnish from a Finnish language newspaper, *Päivälehti*, which her mother sent her, because her mother was not able to correspond in English. In the Finnish community the ability to read and write in Finnish had not been vital to Mrs. Koivu, but after her moving out of the community, the reading and writing of Finnish became practical to her in order to keep in contact with her family. This skill has been valuable to her, because she is still corresponding with her aunt and cousin in Finland in the Finnish language. To the question: "Do your children speak Finnish?" Mrs. Koivu answered:

The two oldest boys did until they were six years old and they began school, whereupon they found out that they were different, and they were teased about it. The oldest boy came home one day and said: "Mother, I am not going to speak another Finnish word"; and that was it. I was not alert to the fact that it is good to know another language, so I let it go. I believe that the two oldest ones understand a little bit, when people talk to them in Finnish, but they can no longer speak it themselves. My youngest son does not understand or speak Finnish at all, and my grand-

children do not either, so they are all Americanized. But I still speak Finnish, although maybe with an American accent, because I do not have a chance to practice it very often.

Mr. Palo also expressed how badly he felt when others made fun of him, because he spoke English with an accent, when he moved from the Finnish farm community in Rock, Michigan to the city of Ishpeming. At college Mr. Palo made a conscious effort to get rid of his accent by taking speech classes, which he successfully did, although in the process of losing his accent, he still retained his ability to speak, read, and write in Finnish. In 1969, when Mr. Palo was visiting Finland for the first time, he said that it was an emotional experience to visit his parents' old homeland and be able to speak the Finnish language. Mr. Palo's wife and daughter do not speak any Finnish.

Mrs. Hill had learned to speak Finnish at home as a little girl, but she has forgotten quite a bit of it. Now she wants to relearn Finnish and she has bought Finnish textbooks for self study. Her husband, who is not of Finnish descent, does not speak Finnish, and neither do her children.

Mr. and Mrs. Eskola and their teenage daughter read, write, and speak the Finnish language, though they of course are fluent in the English language, too.

### C. Religion

Finland is a country where church and state are not separated and where the Evangelical Lutheran church is the state church.

Amanda Wiljanen Larson writes in her book Finnish Heritage in America:

The Finn today is totally American, but even the third and fourth generations treasure their Finnish heritage and have remained faithful to their Lutheran religion (Wiljanen Larson, 1976:37).

My informants responded in the following way to the question about religion.

Mrs. Koivu had an orthodox Protestant background from her home town Finnish community. When Mrs. Koivu moved out of this community, there was no orthodox Protestant church in her new neighborhood. She was looking for a church and visited several. Descriptive in her recollections is a visit to one of these churches. She remembers that the preaching was good, though it was fiery. Then the preacher asked the congregation to the front to confess their sins. All the others went, except Mrs. Koivu, who remained sitting in her pew. The minister came to her and asked why she did not go. She answered that she did not have time to think about her sins and she did not understand what it meant to confess her sins. The minister replied: "You are a child of the devil, aren't you?" and then left. She never went back to this church, though she eventually found a liberal



Protestant church where she has been an active member for almost forty years. Mrs. Koivu did not dare to confront her orthodox religion in her home town Finnish community, though the dogma was not any different from the church where she dared to oppose the same rituals by refusing to participate. The French author Jean-Francois Revel perhaps gives a good explanation, in his book Without Marx or Jesus:

We tend to forget too quickly the despotism exercised by our traditional cultures--the prisons which we called villages, tribes, parishes, corporations, and families (Revel, 1971:74).

Mr. Palo had received his orthodox Protestant religious education in the Finnish ethnic community of Ishpeming, Michigan. At college, he belonged to a Lutheran student club on the campus. But he married a Methodist girl. After their marriage, they visited several churches and chose a liberal Protestant church, which was neither one's former church. Both of them are active members of their church. To the question: "Did your parents feel offended that you changed your religion?" Mr. Palo replied: "No. My mother, especially, was religious, but she felt that as long as I belonged to some church, it was all right." To the question: "Did your home town church react to your changing of your religious affiliation?" Mr. Palo answered: "Maybe they felt that I should stay Lutheran for the rest of my life, and perhaps they still have me in their records there."

Mrs. Hill was raised as a Lutheran. Her husband did not have any special religious affiliation at home, but later, when he was serving in the army he had a religious awakening in a Baptist church. After their marriage they attended a Baptist church. Mrs. Hill was later introduced to a liberal Protestant church, where she felt at home. Her husband was against this at first, but as Mrs. Hill puts it: "I told him that I just needed the message, which this new church offered, even if he would divorce me." Eventually her husband also joined this church and now both of them are active church members.

The Eskolas are Lutherans. But Mrs. Eskola says that she does not feel that special about being a Lutheran. They also visit other churches, though Mrs. Eskola comments that religion does not play a special role in their lives.

#### D. Group Ethnic Identification

To the question: "Do you think that it is important to keep your Finnish heritage alive?" I got the following answers. Mrs. Koivu says:

I am happy with my Finnish heritage. My mother used to say that you have to have "sisu" (which means "guts") in order to get along in this world, and you have to be brave and honest. I was born in America, but I was raised by Finlanders until I was grown-up. I grew up amongst just mostly Finns, except for the schools I went to. I am proud to be an American and I am proud to be a Finlander. The two make a good mixture.

Mr. Palo felt that it was important for him to keep his Finnish heritage alive. He has been one of the founders of the "Friends of Finland," a social organization which meets at the International Institute in Flint, Michigan. He commented that when you have a background in a certain nationality, most people feel that they want to preserve at least some of their cultural heritage. He expressed gratitude for his ability to speak the Finnish language, because with it he can keep in contact with his Finnish relatives. He remembers his parents talking about Finland, which fact gave him special feeling for that faraway little country.

Mrs. Hill said that it is very important for her to keep her Finnish heritage alive. She added that she is disappointed that her paternal grandfather changed his Finnish family name Koivupalo to Solden here in America. Her parents died when the children were young, and the children were then divided into different families without their ethnic surroundings, so that she seemed to lose her ethnic identity for awhile.

Mrs. Eskola commented that she feels that she is 75 percent Finnish and 25 percent American. I was still in their home in the afternoon, when their daughter came home from school. She also answered similarly that she feels that she is 75 percent Finnish.

To my other group identification question: "Do you think families of Finnish descent are different from other

families?", I did not get any clear-cut answers.

The Palos said that they have known families of Polish, Italian, Swedish and other ethnic backgrounds, and it seemed to them that these families have the same basic concerns and character as Finnish families have. Mrs. Eskola said that she did not know many people from other nationalities, so she could not make comparisons. Mrs. Hill thought that perhaps Finnish people have a stronger religious influence in their family life than many other nationalities. Mrs. Koivu stated that just because they are Finnish, they are not different. She mentioned that the concept of "sisu" (which means 'courage') stands out in her memory, along with the honesty of the older Finnish people, whom she remembers from her old Finnish community.

The answers to these questions then show us that these Finnish-Americans want to emphasize their ethnic roots and are proud to be identified as Finnish-Americans.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

On the basis of this study, the conclusion can be reached that conjugal roles are segregated in these Finnish-American families and that the Finnish-American members of these families are proud of their ethnic heritage and want to be identified as Finnish-Americans.

The findings of this study, however, cannot be considered representative of Finnish-American families in general, particularly because of the small sample size. The value of the present research lies in the relationships that the data suggest and not in the proof that these relationships are characteristic of all Finnish-American families. The extent to which the findings may be generalized to other Finnish-American families is a matter for further research.

Nonetheless, we can argue that this study has laid the groundwork with good field research, even if it did not comprise the quantity necessary to establish more far-reaching conclusions. Some of the questions could perhaps be changed, and in particular questions about the roles of men and women in child rearing should be added.

The findings in regard to the roles of these Finnish-American couples do not come as a surprise to us. It is not only Finnish ethnic culture, but the whole civilization itself, which has imposed traditional role expectations for

men and women. One of the very important functions of the institution of the family is to socialize children to be well adjusted and contributing members of the society. We are equipped with the intelligence and understanding to see that we do not neglect this function of the family. At the same time we can argue that the importance of changing role profiles for men and women is a needed fact in today's society.

Marilyn Gardner's commentary "Does the Househusband Really Exist Outside the Movie Theater?", in a recent issue of The Christian Science Monitor, does not indicate a promising outlook in regard to this issue. In an excerpt from her commentary, she states:

In a recent major study of American couples, sociologists Philip Blumstein and Pepper Schwartz found only four husbands out of over 3,600 who said they care for the house full time. "Married men's aversion to housework is so intense it can sour their relationship," the researchers write. "If this pattern continues into the future, it will be a major barrier to the reorganization of husbands' and wives' roles" (Gardner, 1983: 41).

Bowen and Orthner stated in their study that

Many forces--including the changing demographic and role profiles of women, changes in the structure of the family, and the considerable publicity accorded sex-role issues in the press--have contributed to the increased salience and importance of sex-roles in today's society (Bowen and Orthner, 1983:223-224).

This present study can contribute its share to these issues, too.

We cannot deny the importance of ethnicity in the feelings and experiences of the four Finnish-American families in this study.

Suomen Silta - Suomi Bridge magazine published an article entitled "Finn Fest USA - A Huge Success," which described the program of the first Finn Fest USA, held August 5-7, 1983 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. An excerpt from what the English section editor Paul Sjöblom wrote about the festival is as follows:

The study and preservation of the Finnish cultural heritage received special attention on the program. Finn Fest participants gathered, under the sponsorship of the United Fund for Finnish-American Archives, with historians, folklorists, writers, poets and scholars to "share ideas of what being Finnish-American is really about."

Stress was laid on the living heritage, "the here and now, not just the past." In so doing, they endeavored to "look beyond the immigrant life and institutions, and instead to look at the ways our today's heritage is expressed and preserved." Matters were viewed by the participants, according to the printed program, "as Americans living in a multi-ethnic society, as people aware that each ethnic culture is part of and contributes to the whole of American culture and society" (Sjöblom, 1983: 30).

I will conclude with the wish that this research project can help us to better understand Finnish-Americans and appreciate their "contributions to the whole of American culture and society."

## APPENDIX

### The Interviewing Outline

#### I. Marital Roles

##### A. Decision Making

Who decides:

1. What job the husband should take?
2. What car to get?
3. Whether or not to buy life insurance?
4. Where to go on a vacation?
5. What house or apartment to take?
6. Whether or not the wife should go to work or quit work?
7. What physician to have, when someone is sick?
8. How much money the family can afford to spend per week on food?

##### B. Household Activities

1. Who repairs things around the house?
2. Who mows the lawn?
3. Who shovels the sidewalk?
4. Who keeps track of the money and the bills?
5. Who does the grocery shopping?
6. Who gets the husband's breakfast on work days?
7. Who straightens out the living room, when company is coming?
8. Who cooks the evening meal and does the dishes?



### C. Leisure Activities

1. Do you participate in your leisure activities together as a family?
2. Does your husband have leisure activities which he does alone?
3. What type of entertainment does your family enjoy?
4. What do you do on weekends?

## II. Finnish Ethnicity

### A. Food

### B. Language

### C. Religion

1. Do you think that it is important to keep your Finnish heritage alive?
2. Do you think families of Finnish descent are different from other families?

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